

9 February 1955

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

25X1A5a1

SUBJECT: [REDACTED] Comments on O/NE Operations

- 25X1A5a1
1. All apologies for being so late in responding to your request for a comment on [REDACTED] letter to you of 23 October 1954.
  2. All of us have been well aware of Joe's first point—too much Board time spent in meetings—not enough spent on reading and reflexion.
  3. At present we are working on a two panel system—no more than four Board members see a paper all the way through the coordination process. This has added considerably to uncommitted Board time and is paying off well.
  4. Regarding paragraph 2. I agree the Board might save Board time by making written comments to the draft. On the other hand Joe well knows that unless the writer of the comment is able to explain and defend his suggestion orally, other Board members may disallow it. Thus it is possible, nay probable, that Joe's suggestion would result in greater rather than less outlay of Board time. As applied to comments to be written by the IAC agencies, we have discouraged certain aspects of this and encouraged others. Wisely we have discouraged written comments which were not actual amended text on the ground that anything written down may by the mere fact of redaction and clearance have taken on the rigidity of an official position. Unnecessary fights and bitter ones over inconsequentialities may thus generate. We have, however, continuously urged agency representatives to come to our meetings with amended text and enough copies for everyone. We hat about 350 to 400 in this respect.
  5. Regarding paragraph 3. I agree that conclusions are the crux of NIE's and should be improved. But Joe's suggestion that "it might be ruled that conclusions alone are binding as agreed intelligence" is not sound. It seems to me highly likely that a reader displeased with a given conclusion could seriously challenge

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its validity if he could establish any doubt as to the degree of support this conclusion received in the corpus of the paper. It seems likely that if conclusions and text did not scrupulously conform the displeased reader could easily and persuasively challenge their validity by quick and damning reference to the text itself.

6. Regarding paragraph 4. I agree that our worst fault is the compromise formulation which is ambiguous or meaningless or both. Some of these occur in moments of fatigue; others occur because they are simply unavoidable. Joe, as you, is well aware that IAC agencies prefer to avoid a footnote of dissent. The why is relatively unimportant; the fact is that upon occasions an agency simply cannot be driven to take a footnote without having all other agencies associate themselves with it. This leaves you, the DCI, farther out on a limb than the Board likes to put you--particularly if the footnote is so constructed as to make the man who will not accept it seem slightly brushed. The Agencies have developed the formulation of such notes of dissent to a very fine art and very interesting tool of blackmail. Your Board is much concerned but sometimes helpless in the presence of this dilemma.

7. Regarding paragraph 5. On perhaps as many as four different occasions in four years we have made arrangements to keep the reading room open till 5:30 or 6:00 p.m. Each time we have abandoned the service because virtually no one availed himself of it.

8. My replies above may seem to indicate that I think things in O/NE are perfect. I do own that they are good but not perfect. Rather it is that I do not happen to go all the way with all of Joe's comments.

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National Estimates

O/NE:Kent:eh  
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